



ST. CHARLES PARISH

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING

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PARISH PRESIDENT

KIM MAROUSEK, AICP
PLANNING DIRECTOR

July 2, 2008

To: Chair Morris Becnel and Planning Commission Members
From: Kim Marousek, AICP, Planning Director
RE: Ama Land Use and Zoning Study Summary Report

Proposed Action: Hold public hearing and make recommendation to Council on community wide rezoning recommendations based on Ama Land Use and Zoning Study.

Background: In 2007, key land use decisions for rezoning and potential subdivisions in the Ama community prompted the parish Council to adopt a moratorium on major subdivisions in Ama and to commission a land use and zoning study. In early 2008, the Council renewed the moratorium through August 2008 pending the study results. The goal of the land use study was to analyze the current zoning in Ama and to determine if zoning changes are warranted. The parish contracted Urban Systems, a New Orleans transportation and planning consulting firm, to complete the study. A draft study was completed and distributed to the public on May 28, 2008.

Discussion: Much of Ama is currently zoned R-1AM, a residential zone with the ability to place mobile homes. The minimum lot size for this zoning district is 5,000 square feet. Ama also contains some areas zoned R-1A, which permits site built single family homes but prohibits mobile home placements. The minimum lot size in the R-1A zone is 6,000 square feet. Other areas in the community are zoned OL, open land, which allows for multiple single family dwellings on a lot, allows for the placement of mobile homes, and allows for agricultural uses. The minimum lot size in the OL district is 20,000 square feet. Select areas along River Road are zoned C-1 and C-2, commercial. Ama also contains industrially zoned properties however, no zoning changes were recommended for those properties.

Infrastructure limitations such as the narrow roadways and limited availability of water and sewer in the area suggest that a dense development pattern in Ama would not be appropriate at this time. The total buildable area currently zoned R-1AM is about 208 acres. Although a full build-out is not anticipated, if developed to capacity the current R-1AM zoning could result in an increase of 1,816 new residential units.

Although a significant area of Ama is zoned to permit the placement of mobile homes, permit data reviewed over the past several years showed that site built single family home permits outstripped the requests for mobile home permits. The majority of mobile home permits were granted to replace existing mobile home structures. An analysis of the existing homes in the community found that site built single family homes constituted 75% of the housing stock; whereas, mobile homes made up the additional 25%.

The community expressed a series of goals during the community meeting and through the survey responses that relate to land use. Generally, the community wants to retain a "rural" character, limit the ability to permit new mobile homes, and to provide opportunities for new residential development with a range of price points.

The zoning recommendations found in the study are more reflective of the current development pattern in Ama. Most of the area currently zoning R-1AM would be rezoned to R-1A and OL. The proposed areas of R-1A generally line up with the current edge of the developed area with the potential OL property extending back toward the railroad tracks. Areas recommended for rezone to R-1A generally are developed with a majority of site built single-family residential homes. In some cases, the study recommends retaining the R-1AM zoning because the existing land use pattern is mostly mobile home development. It is important to note that if a property is developed with a mobile home and the zoning is changed to R-1A, the trailer would be a legal nonconforming use that could be replaced provided the nonconforming regulations are met.

Other proposed zoning changes are to change all commercially zoned property in Ama to C-2 and to change approximately 5 acres of OL to C-2 zoning on the Bunge property. This would provide for a greater range of commercial uses and the potential for more community oriented commercial development. The study also recommends realigning the Wetland, W, zoning to follow the south side of the Union Pacific Railroad in order to align the zoning boundary with the physical boundary of the railroad. Development of any property encumbered with wetlands, regardless of the zoning designation, would be required to obtain necessary US Army Corps of Engineer permits.

Two public meetings were held in the Ama Community. The first meeting was held on March 12, 2008 to gather public input at the initial stage of the study process. A second Town Hall meeting was held on June 11, 2008 after the draft study was released. At the June 11th meeting two map errors were noted on Figure 5-A "Recommended Zoning." The map showed the R-1AM boundary as the eastern side of PM Lane; however, the R-1AM zoning currently extends to the properties lying on the west side of PM Lane. The recommended zoning would not change the current R-1AM boundary on PM Lane. Both sides of PM Lane should retain the R-1AM zoning. Also, the Recommended Zoning map reduced the R-1AM zoning near Griffin Lane; however, the actual edge of the proposed R-1AM zoning will extend to the southern edge of the developed portion of the street to ensure that existing homes are kept conforming. These minor changes are reflected in the proposed ordinance language.

Recommendation: The staff recommends approval of the zoning recommendations contained in the Ama Land Use Study as expressed in the draft ordinance.